Cornell-Dubilier Electronics Contamination Update

The Straight Facts **July 14, 2008**

THE SITE

- **Location:** Cornell-Dubilier is located at 333 Hamilton Boulevard in South Plainfield, NJ.
- **Size:** Cornell-Dubilier Electronics ran a 26-acre facility, disposing of contaminated materials onsite and in the adjacent Bound Brook.
- **Contaminants of Concern:** PCBs, Dioxins/Furans, PCE, TCE, Lead, Mercury, Arsenic, Methylene Chloride, Vinyl Chloride, Semi-volatile organic compounds, Aldrin, Endrin, Dieldrin, Cobalt, Copper and Thallium
- **Areas of Concern:**
  - Nearby residential, commercial and municipal properties (Operable Unit 1 or OU1)
  - Soils and former buildings (OU2)
  - Contaminated groundwater (OU3)
  - Contaminated Bound Brook (OU4)
- **Pathways of Human Exposure:** According to USEPA, there are nearly a dozen pathways for people to be impacted by Cornell's contaminants, including jogging, fishing and playing along the Bound Brook.

The purpose of this fact sheet is to provide accurate and updated information on the Cornell-Dubilier Electronics (CDE) Superfund Site located in South Plainfield, New Jersey.

THE PROBLEM

As the USEPA plans to leave high levels of PCBs onsite, the Agency is also facing a serious public health and environmental challenge in the Bound Brook. The USEPA's recent sampling study confirmed that the contamination from Cornell-Dubilier in the Bound Brook is alarmingly higher than it was in 1997, when USEPA found elevated levels of PCB contamination.

Despite clear evidence that PCBs were continuing to migrate offsite, USEPA management decided to sit on their hands for a decade. In the 10 years since, erosion has drastically worsened the cancer-causing PCB-levels. To date, USEPA has yet to announce how it will remediate the witches' brew of highly contaminated sediments in the Bound Brook. In fact, the USEPA has yet to even adequately inform the public about the threats.

Making matters worse, the Bound Brook flows from the Cornell site through downtown South Plainfield and then fills New Market Pond in Piscataway, a public park with fishing derbies and pond front gazebos. The water then flows through the town of Bound Brook—with it notorious flooding downtown—before draining into the Raritan River, the longest river in New Jersey.

"Ten years ago, the USEPA could have fixed this problem but chose not to," said EWA Executive Director Robert Spiegel. "Now that is has gotten seriously worse, the families of Central New Jersey need a thorough immediate cleanup and investigation of the entire Bound Brook—not more excuses from USEPA."

Potential Health Effects of Toxic PCBs

According to the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services Health effects associated with general exposure to PCBs include: acne-like skin conditions in adults and neurobehavioral and immunological changes in children. Large exposure to PCBs is known to cause skin cancer and liver damage in humans and to affect adult reproductive systems.

Animals that ate food containing large amounts of PCBs in a short amount of time had mild liver damage and some died. Animals that ate food containing small amounts of PCBs over a long period of time developed anemia, skin conditions, and liver, stomach, and thyroid gland injuries.

USEPA Plans to Finish Cornell Cleanup by the Year 2034

According to the USEPA site remediation schedule, the agency does not expect the Cornell-Dubilier cleanup to be complete until the year 2034.

"In other words, the USEPA will finish cleaning up Cornell in the year two-thousand-never," said EWA's Robert Spiegel. "That has to change, and the USEPA must have a newfound sense of urgency about this public health threat."

CONTACT INFORMATION

Questions concerning Cornell-Dubilier's public health threats and cleanup progress can be directed to:

- George Pavlou, US EPA Region 2 Director of the Emergency and Remedial Response Division, at (212) 637-5000 or e-mail at pavlou.george@epa.gov

THE SOLUTION

Immediate USEPA Cleanup Needed for Cancer-Causing PCBs along Waterway

Environmental Engineer Richard Chapin of Chapin Engineering recommends that immediate action be taken to close off contaminated areas and to remove any contamination to prevent any further downstream migration of PCB concentrations. Among the urgent steps needed are:

- Expedite Bound Brook investigation with all funding necessary to cleanup entire Bound Brook to levels protective of human health and the environment,
- Expedite overall cleanup schedule to finish cleaning up Cornell-Dubilier over the next decade, rather than the year 2034.
- Restricted access to the contaminated Bound Brook Corridor.
- Removal of all capacitors, contaminated sediment and the stabilization of banks to prevent downstream migration of contaminants.
- USEPA must immediately test the entire area of the Bound Brook down to New Market Pond and beyond.
- All local health and environmental agencies should be notified of the current conditions of the Bound Brook.
- The currently in-place fish advisory must be updated and vigorously publicized to assure the local residents are aware of the significantly increased PCBs in the Bound Brook.
- A biological assessment of current PCB levels in the fish and other biota in the Bound Brook is required.
- USEPA should hold public forums this August in all towns located along the Bound Brook.

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